



# "More than one challenge"

Europe's printing ink industry sees overall growth, but number of regulations increases

Miriam von Bardeleben

"What is the biggest single challenge for the printing ink industry?", Dr Dirk Aulbert, Chairman of the European Printing Ink Association (EuPIA), asked on 31 March, right at the beginning of the two-day Annual Conference 2011 in Vienna/Austria. None of the nearly 90 participants seemed to be surprised when the Chairman stated that there was more than one answer to this question.

Describing the multiple challenges that the European printing ink manufacturers are currently confronted with, Dr Aulbert stated that there was indeed more than one issue to be dealt with.

## High expectations & ongoing recovery

Apart from high expectations from the part of governments and consumers, some parts of the printing inks industry have still not recovered fully from the crisis. While the demand for packaging applications has picked up, with some product lines even reaching pre-crisis levels, the situation looks completely different for printing inks used for the production of newspapers. Complete recovery in this segment is still uncertain, said Dr Aulbert. Up to two-digit price increases for indispensable raw materials make the situation even worse.

These currently most pressing issues were consequently reflected by the majority of presentations and discussions. The printing ink industry has in parts reacted to these challenging conditions with far-reaching measures like cutting capacities or even restructuring.

## Overall increases in volume and value

Despite the various hurdles which the industry has had to overcome: In the year 2010 sales figures increased for about 70 % of the printing ink product lines.

Overall the printing ink manufacturers within EuPIA increased their sales volumes in 2010 on average by 3.6% (in t) compared to the previous year. With 3.2% of growth, the positive development of the corresponding value figure slightly lagged behind, (both figures excluding export), as *Martin Cellerier*, Chairman of EuPIA's Statistics Working Group, explained in his detailed presentation on the market development. Altogether the volume reached 1.13 million tons, with the value amounting to EUR 3.43 billion in 2010 (incl.export). Of the overall printing inks sales volume, liquid products represent 29 %.

In spite of these positive figures there have also been signs of decline in some countries like France and the Netherlands during the second half of 2010. The reason for this worrying development is not clear, yet. Furthermore, Martin Cellerier reported average price decreases of -0.3 % for printing inks in almost every market. The market expert also observed another new development,



For more events:  
[www.european-coatings.com/events](http://www.european-coatings.com/events)

which is a beginning disconnection between the development of a country's printing ink industry and its GDP.

### The raw material dilemma: Prices go up, while availability is going down

Like their colleagues in the paint and coatings industry, Europe's printing ink manufacturers have to struggle with high raw material prices. According to EuPIA, the all-time high prices of oil and gum rosins have the biggest negative impact on this industry.

In the course of a vivid discussion about the insufficient availability of important raw materials, conference speaker *Juan Antonio Merino*, Commercial Vice President, Dow Europe, stated that looking at the future development of this issue it is likely that raw materials will not be available at the right time in the right place. "In my opinion, no company can afford it any more to invest in additional capacities, before the demand is clearly visible. We only invest if there is a return", said Merino, explaining that today there was no flexibility any more to push costs backwards, but that instead they have to be pushed forward to the end user.

### Thought provoking topics

In his invitation to Vienna, the EuPIA Chairman had promised a thought provoking conference. And he delivered. Two presentations and a panel discussion dedicated to print media raised a slight hope that in the end there may still be some future market for these products, although print media is often said to be obsolete and to be entirely substituted by its digital counterparts soon. The complex issues around the use of food packaging inks were touched by *Dr. Ute Galle-Hoffmann*, German Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Pro-

tection (BMELV) who explained the need for and contents of a regulation on food packaging inks from the perspective of the German competent authority. Regarding those aspects of her draft which are considered as being critical by the printing ink industry, the speaker seemed ready to discuss e.g. definitions and classifications as well as a guideline for additions to a whitelist. But when it came to other important aspects like the desire for a European directive instead of a national regulation and the classification of pigments as (according to the regulation forbidden) nano materials, parts of the audience would have liked to receive further clarification. ◀

### Facts & Figures

The European Printing Ink Association (EuPIA)  
 - founded in 2003 as a division of CEPE  
 - EuPIA represents the interests of 90 % of the European manufacturers of printing inks  
Chairman: Dr Dirk Aulbert  
Vice Chairman: Thomas Hensel  
Executive Manager: Dr Martin Kanert

Contact:  
 Av Van Nieuwenhuysse, 6  
 BE-1160 Brussels  
 Tel. +32 26767480  
 Fax +32 26767490  
 E-mail: eupia@cepe.org  
[www.eupia.org](http://www.eupia.org)



Oxylink™

For better waterborne coatings



The new performance additive for waterborne coatings

- *Shorter* drying time
- *Better* blocking resistance
- *Improved* Solvent resistance
- *Higher* humidity resistance
- *Reduced* dirt pick up
- *Increased* crosslinking

Call us for more information or for a free sample!

Oxylink@buhlergroup.com  
 +49 (0) 681 - 394 6550  
[www.buhlergroup.com](http://www.buhlergroup.com)

